

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 9532

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR SHUM MX

SUBJECT: MONTHLY POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS - OCTOBER

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ON HIS UNILATERAL DECISIONS IN SEPTEMBER TO NAME LOPEZ PORTILLO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND TO CUT ALL TIES WITH SPAIN, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA IN OCTOBER SHOWED HE IS STILL IN CHARGE: DOMESTICALLY HE SHIFTED THREE CABINET OFFICERS TO CAMPAIGN POSITIONS IN THE PRI AND SONORA GOVERNOR BIEBRICH -- ONCE THE PRI'S FAIR-HAIRED BOY--WAS MADE SCAPEGOAT FOR A CAMPESINO MASSACRE ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT ECHEVERRIA (APPARENTLY IGNORING CONTRARY RECOMMENDATIONS) MADE DECISION TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF RESOLUTION ON ZIONISM. THE PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS HAVE CAUSED CONCERN HERE THAT HIS DESIRE TO RETAIN POLITICAL INFLUENCE EXTENDS BEYOND HIS TERM OF OFFICE A CONCERN UNDIMINISHED BY HIS STATEMENT OCT 20 THAT HE'LL RETURE NEXT YEAR. MEANWHILE LOPEZ PORTILLO, WINDING UP FIRST CAMPAIGN TRIP, IS PROVING TO BE A RELATIVELY NON-CONTROVERSIAL CANDIDATE, ALTHOUGH THE EXTREME LEFT WING HAS ATTACKED HIS APPARENT SYMPATHY TOWARD PRIVATE SECTOR. OPPOSITION PAN HAS YET TO FIELD A CANDIDATE. ON HUMAN RIGHTS THE MASSACRE OF SIX CAMPESINOS AND DEATH IN MEXICO CITY PRISON OF STILL UNSENTENCED TERRORIST MADE MEXICANS EVEN MORE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PRESIDENTIAL PIOUSNESS REGARDING SPAIN. END SUMMARY.

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1. INTERREGNUM PROSPECTS - NO LAME DUCK: THOSE WHO PREDICTED ECHEVERRIA'S EFFECTIVE EXERCISE OF POWER WOULD END WHEN HE NAMED HIS SUCCESSOR ARE BEING CONTRADICTED BY UNILATERAL PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS. ALTHOUGH DUTIFULLY ENDORSING THEM PUBLICLY, MEXICANS PRIVATELY EXPRESS DOUBTS ABOUT WISDOM OF THESE DECISIONS AND CONCERN ABOUT LARGER IMPLICATION THAT ECHEVERRIA IS ACTING TO RETAIN POLITICAL POWER THROUGH -- AND PERHAPS BEYOND -- HIS TERM OF OFFICE. LOPEZ PORTILLO, WHO LACKS POLITICAL FOLLOWING OF HIS OWN, HAS BEEN PROVIDED ECHEVERRIA'S THREE MOST LOYAL (IDEALOGICALLY AS WELL AS PERSONALLY) CABINET SECRETARIES FOR HIS CAMPAIGN. IN MEANTIME, ONE OF GOVERNMENT SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA'S CLOSEST POLITICAL ASSOCIATES SONORA GOVERNOR BIEBRICH, WAS FORCED TO RESIGN FOLLOWING THE CAMPESINO INCIDENT FOR WHICH RESPONSIBILITY COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED ELSEWHERE. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT DECLARED OCT 20 THAT HE'LL RETIRE AFTER LEAVING PRESIDENCY, EXCELSIOR STILL FELT NEED TO EDITORIALIZE IN DIRECT LANGUAGE THAT "HEALTH OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS" REQUIRED THAT PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY BE PASSED "IN ITS ENTIRETY" TO JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO ON DEC 1, 1976. WE DOUBT PRESIDENT'S INTENTIONS ARE SO AMBITIOUS AS TO RETAIN POWER ONCE JLP BECOMES PRESIDENT AND EVEN IF THEY WERE, POWERS OF MODERN MEXICAN PRESIDENCY MAKE THAT IMPROBABLE. BUT GIVEN ECHEVERRIA'S TEMPERMENTAL DIFFICULTY WITH THOUGHT OF RELINQUISHING HIS POSITION, INTERREGNUM WILL LIKELY BE CHARACTERIZED BY PRUDENCE ON PART OF LOPEZ PORTILLO, AND SOME FURTHER ILL CONSIDERED ACTIONS BY THE PRESIDENT. (SEE MEXICO A-412 OF OCT 24.)

2. MEXICO VOTES IN FAVOR OF ZIONISM RESOLUTION: APPARENTLY IGNORING COUNSEL TO ABSTAIN, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA DIRECTED MEXICAN UN DELEGATION TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF THIRD COMMITTEE RESOLUTION DECLARING ZIONISM A FORM OF RACISM. IN PUBLIC RESPONSE TO U.S. NOTE EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT FONSEC RABASA DECLARED MEXICO'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO VOTE AS IT PLEASES, THEREBY AVOIDING ISSUE OF WHY MEXICO VOTED AS IT DID. FOREIGN SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS ARE PRIVATELY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH VOTE.

3. PAN STILL ON SIDELINES IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: THE
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OPPOSITION PAN, WHICH WON 14 PERCENT OF VOTE IN LAST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BUT IS STRONGER IN URBAN AREAS, FAILED TO AGREE UPON PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN NATIONAL CONVENTION OCT 19. PAN ALMOST EVENLY DIVIDED INTO CAMPS OF PAST AND PRESENT PRESIDENTS, JOSE ANGEL CONCHELLO AND EFRAIN GONZALEZ, RESPECTIVELY, ALTHOUGH NEITHER IS HIMSELF CANDIDATE. GONZALEZ FACTION WOULD PREFER TO LET PRI SQUIRM WITHOUT PRESIDENTIAL OPPOSITION AND CONCENTRATE RESOURCES ON MORE

VULNERABLE MUNICIPAL AND CONGRESSIONAL PRI CANDIDATES,
BUT SENTIMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IS PROBABLY MAJORITY
VIEW. SECOND CONVENTION WILL BE HELD WITHIN NEXT TWO MONTHS.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS:

A. TERRORIST DEATH IN MEXICO CITY PRISON: AN
ALLEGED ESCAPE ATTEMPT BY THREE INMATES FROM THE CAPITOL'S
LECUMBERRI PRISON RESULTED IN DEATH OF MIGUEL DOMINQUEZ
RODRIGUEZ, ARRESTED IN 1972 FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.
PERCIEVED FISHINESS OF OFFICIAL EXPLANATION
(WHICH CHANGED ONCE) LED EXCELSIOR AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS
TO DEMAND FULL EXPLANATION AND TO SEE UNWELCOME PARALLEL
BETWEEN MEXICAN AND SPANISH TREATMENT OF TERRORISTS, BUT
AFTER INITIAL COMMENT, PRESS DROPPED THE MATTER, EITHER
OUT OF PRUDENCE OR FOLLOWING GOM DIRECTIVE.

B. SIX CAMPESINOS WERE KILLED AND FIFTEEN MORE
WOUNDED WHEN SONORA STATE JUDICIAL POLICE, ACTING ON A
COURT ORDER, FORCEFULLY DISLODGED THE CAMPESINOS FROM LAND
THEY HAD OCCUPIED FOR SEVERAL DAYS. GOM AND AGRARIAN SECTOR
OF THE PRI MANAGED QUICKLY TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH CAUSE OF THE
CAMPESINOS, WHOSE CLAIM TO LAND APPARENTLY HAS BEEN "EN
TRAMITE" WITH SECRETARIAT OF AGRARIAN REFORM FOR
25 YEARS.

5. THE LOPEX PORTILLO CAMPAIGN: JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO
(JLP) WILL SHORTLY END HIS FIRST CAMPAIGN TRIP,
WHICH HAS TAKEN HIM TO QUERETERO, GUANAJUATO, JALISCO,
AND COLIMA. SINCE TAKING OATH AS CANDIDATE AND
INAUGURATING CAMPAIGN IN QUERETERO, JLP HAS NOT MADE A MAJOR
SPEECH. MEXICAN HEADLINE WRITERS ARE HAVING
DIFFICULTY FINDING SALEABLE COPY IN HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH
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REPORTERS AND COMMENTS TO CROWDS.

6. EXTREME LEFT WING OF POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, HOWEVER,
(FOR EXAMPLE, GASTON GARCIA CANTU) HAS EXPRESSED ALARM
OVER JLP RECEPTIVITY TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, TO WHOM HE
PROPOSED AN "ALLIANCE FOR PRODUCTION." IN QUERETERO
GROUP HEADED BY INDUSTRIALIST BERNARDO QUINTANA
RESPONDED WITH SPECIFIC PROPOSALS.
BRANDIN

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